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ABSTRACT

Most barriers to higher education fall into one of six categories: personal access barriers (e.g., lack of information, low self-esteem, or loss of motivation); socioeconomic barriers (e.g., lack of transportation or child care); sociocultural barriers (e.g., family pressures or language problems); socioeducational barriers (e.g., inadequate academic skills or image of the community college); institutional organization and culture (e.g., lack of personalized counseling or role models); and federal and state regulations (e.g., lowering of funding and restriction of financial aid requirements). Over its 27-year history, Mercer County Community College (MCCC) has developed many unique access programs and services to accomplish its mission of providing educational opportunities to all residents of the county. These programs include the following: (1) MCCC has helped county high schools develop college fair events during school hours and in the evening; (2) the MCCC recruitment program offers a long-term counseling component to prepare students to enter college; (3) hourly bus service to campus is provided, and bus tickets are 50% subsidized; (4) child care is available on campus; (5) minority admissions counselors are specially designated; (6) welfare students are provided with additional stipends and scholarships; (7) small-group counseling is available to help students resolve family pressures; (8) all students are given a basic skills placement test; (9) literacy and developmental programs are available to assist underprepared students; (10) high school equivalency exam training programs are provided free of charge; and (11) non-credit youth programs help develop student motivation to attend college. Insufficient funding may force open access institutions like MCCC to eliminate special programs, limit the number of students, or eliminate open access altogether. (KP)

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IDENTIFYING AND DEALING WITH ACCESS BARRIERS
AT MERCER COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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June, 1994

Abstract

This paper discusses barriers to open access to higher education and selected services and programs used to breach such barriers at a New Jersey community college. The approach is descriptive and qualitative. The purpose of the paper is to place open access in an historical frame, to provide a comprehensive listing of access barriers, and to offer for consideration some of the barrier-breaking solutions which MCCC has implemented.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Access to higher education is part of the elitism-democracy continuum which has been an integral part of the history and growth of higher education in America. Who should go to college? Elitism supports the contention that only the best should be taken. Democracy, the unique belief system which supports the "right" of all to participate, holds that everyone deserves access to higher education.

Interestingly, access has been a "survival issue" for the individual institutions of higher education, even those who fully supported and still support elitism. Simply, certain levels of student enrollment are necessary, and when enrollment has needed a push, most institutions have reached out, and continue to reach out, to fill their seats.

It can be stated without much contradiction from elitists that the history of higher education in America has been a process of opening the door to more and more individuals. When the colonial colleges could not garner enough academically competent students, they opened developmental (remediation) programs. When there were not enough young men to fill American colleges and universities, women were admitted. The reverse happened about one hundred years later at exclusively female colleges. When there were not enough students with the money for tuition, government

provided financial aid to students who could not afford college themselves, and more students flocked to higher education. When Caucasians could not fill enrollments, "students of color" were sought. Currently, new populations -- adult students, senior citizens, homemakers, foreign students, for example -- are being groomed and tapped.

With the advent of the junior college movement and its successor, the community college movement, there was an obvious sigh of relief from the elitism camp and applause from the democratic camp. Both have claimed victory while critics have begun to list the shortcomings of open access community-college-style.

Aside from these historical threads and the claims of the elitists, democratizers, and their critics, access is not a simple concept, nor is it easy to implement. An "open door" is not access. Access, operationally defined, is the provision of an "opportunity to enter and to succeed" to a defined population of potential students. It has to be carefully planned to be a success. Regretfully, such planning has been either nonexistent or remedial and backtracking. In most cases, open access is really a "revolving door" for many students. It is a sobering fact that only about one-third of the community college students who try for an associate degree will actually receive one.

MAJOR BARRIERS TO OPEN ACCESS

Most access limitations or barriers fit into six categories: personal, socioeconomic, sociocultural, socioeducational, institutional organization and culture, and federal and state regulations. At MCCC, 47 access barriers have been identified which fit into the preceding categories. Below is a list of access barriers by category.

Personal Access Barriers

1. Lack of Information
2. Lack of Familiarity with a Campus Environment
3. Inadequate Stress Management
4. Lack of Mobility -- Disabled Person
5. Low Self-Concept
6. Low Self-Esteem
7. Loss of Motivation
8. Lowered Goal Horizons
9. Short-run Hedonism
10. Lack of Responsibility
11. Lack of Organization

Socioeconomic Barriers

1. Insufficient Discretionary Funds
2. Transportation Problem
3. No Child Care Option

Socioeconomic Barriers - Continued

4. No Care Option for Elderly Relatives
5. Racial and Gender Discrimination
6. Unemployment or Underemployment
7. Federal, State, and Local Welfare Regulations
8. Shift from Production Economy to Service Economy

Sociocultural Barriers

1. Family Pressures
2. Language Problems
3. Culture of Poverty
4. Racial and Gender Prejudice
5. Lack of Technological Competencies

Socioeducational Barriers

1. Inadequate Academic Skills
2. Literacy Problem
3. Image of the Community College
4. Prior School Experiences
5. No High School Diploma or GED Certificate

Institutional Organization and Culture Barriers

1. Lack of Precedent
2. Lack of Personalized/Tailored Counseling
3. Lack of Role Models
4. Lack of Sensitivity Among Staff and Faculty Members

Institutional Organization and Culture Barriers - Continued

5. Tuition and Fees
6. Cost of Books and Supplies
7. Restrictive Policies
8. Admissions Requirements
9. Disjointed Operations (Credit and Noncredit Operations)
10. Lack of Financial Aid for Part-Time Students
11. Inappropriate Master Class Schedule
12. Limited Program Offerings

Federal and State Regulations As Barriers

1. Student Health Insurance
2. Student Immunization Record
3. Lowering of Funding Support
4. Continuing Restriction of Financial Aid Requirements
5. New Disclosure Regulations
6. New Affirmative Action Regulations

PROFILE OF MCCC

Mercer County Community College is a public, coeducational college with roots that reach back to the early 1900's. The Trenton School of Industrial Arts was established in the early 20th Century to provide vocational training to the people of the Greater Metropolitan Area. In

the 1930's, Trenton Junior College was established and incorporated the School of Industrial Arts. In 1966, Mercer County Community College was established and absorbed Trenton Junior College. At each stage of development, the new organization continued to make available the programs and services which were operated by its predecessor. The end result was that MCCC emerged as a comprehensive college with a strong transfer component and a history of vocational programming. Upon this base, the college has added many additional transfer and vocational programs including regional programs and distant learning programs. Associate in Applied Science programs outnumber Associate in Arts and Associate in Science programs two to one. Interestingly, during the last seven years there has been a significant trend in more and more A.A.S. graduates seeking higher education and having a relatively easy access into local and regional four-year colleges and universities, both public and private.

MCCC's market penetration is 9% of its service community -- an unduplicated headcount of over 28,000 students and clients in a county of approximately 330,000 residents. The credit enrollment averages 12,000 students annually with 3,500 full-time students and 8,500 part-time students. Between 45% and 52% of entering students each

year need some type of remediation. Approximately 78% of the student population is Caucasian. Of the 22% minority students, most are African American followed by Hispanic.

Noncredit programs enroll 17,000 students. Adult training programs have the largest noncredit enrollment followed by youth programs and avocational programs.

The college has a main, suburban campus and an inner-city campus. Its budget is a little over 38 million dollars. Forty percent of its revenue comes from tuition and fees. Of the remaining revenue, 35% comes from county government, 22% from state government, and three percent from grants.

The college has been able to identify and to address a significant number of access limitations or barriers over its 27-year history. As a result, it has developed many, unique access programs and services.

MCCC SOLUTIONS TO ACCESS BARRIERS

The primary mission of MCCC is to provide postsecondary, educational opportunities to all residents of Mercer County. To accomplish this mission, the college has maintained an open-door (open access) policy since it was chartered in 1966. Claiming to be an open-door institution is not the same as actively striving to be an open-door

institution. Throughout its history, MCCC has continued to identify access barriers and to develop services and programs which will reduce the barriers.

Personal Access Barriers

In many cases, the lack of information and familiarity with the college act as very strong access barriers. To reduce such barriers, MCCC has helped county high schools develop college fair events during school hours and in the evening to bring information to students and their parents. Also, a program of career fairs and "open house" events are conducted by the academic divisions of the college on both of its campuses throughout the academic year. Invitations to these events are sent to high school classes. In addition, transportation is arranged for students to attend these events.

Recruitment activities have become less business orientated and more psychologically orientated over the last ten years in order to overcome the growing personal access barriers of low self-concept, low self-esteem, loss of motivation and inadequate stress management. Low self-concept refers here to a potential student's inability to see himself/herself as a whole person with individual strengths and weaknesses. Low self-esteem refers to the potential student's self-assessment or self-evaluation as an

individual with worth. MCCC faculty and staff who do recruiting are focusing more and more on helping potential students to reduce personal stress and to develop positive outlooks, especially disabled persons who suffer also from from a lack of mobility and the psycho-emotional pressure of being disabled.

New personal access barriers which have surfaced in the last five years include lowered goal horizons, short-run hedonism, lack of organizational skills, and lack of responsibility. The first two barriers need no explanation; they are real and quite understandable. Lack of organizational skills refers to the individual's inability to understand and follow the steps necessary to accomplish a task within an appropriate time frame. Lack of responsibility refers to the individual's inability to follow through on commitments and/or to accomplish tasks which he/she accepts as important to his/her future.

It is possible that these new barriers may simply be the result of the college's reaching more deeply into the lower socioeconomic classes for potential students. These barriers are, according to some social researchers, very much a part of the culture of poverty.

Together with the personal access barriers discussed above, the new barriers have changed the nature of the

recruitment process. To provide open access to potential students who themselves carry many personal access barriers requires a recruitment program which offers a strong counseling component and long-term contact. In some cases, it has taken between six and ten sessions over a 15-month period to prepare a potential student to enter the college. Meeting this challenge, MCCC has developed a computerized inquiry and applicant tracking systems to assist its recruiters in maintaining contact with potential students.

Socioeconomic Barriers

Insufficient discretionary funds form a very real access barrier for a potential student who is not eligible for financial aid. This barrier has been heightened further by the shift from a production economy to a service economy. Simply, the jobs which are being created are lower-paying and with less benefits than the industrial jobs which are being lost. To address this barrier, MCCC provides students with financial counseling, a partial payment plan, campus employment opportunities which depend on available funds, foundation-sponsored scholarships, and a flexible, part-time class schedule option.

Transportation problems, no child care option, and no care option for elderly relatives are access barriers which the college does not have adequate resources to address.

MCCC's success in lowering two of these barriers has included (a) establishing an agreement with the County Transportation Authority to provide hourly bus service to the college's campuses, (b) subsidizing half the cost of a bus ticket, and (c) providing a child care service on the West Windsor Campus which can accommodate 20 children at a given time. The college has not attempted to address the problem of care for elderly relatives. Some critics believe that these barriers stand outside the mission commitment of the college and should be handled through general government programs and subsidies.

Racial and gender discrimination is an access barrier which remains a thorny problem. Visible minority persons need open, honest communication and commitments in the recruitment (access) process. MCCC provides specially designated admissions counselors to assist these potential students. Additionally, the college supports an African American Student Union and Minority Forum which provide applicant and student support services and feedback to the college on service improvements.

Unemployment and underemployment are very strong access barriers. Family and personal costs have to be met before most potential students can see their way clear to take advantage of higher educational opportunities. MCCC has

established a creative, two-stage program to eliminate unemployment and underemployment as access barriers. Potential students are placed in job training programs offered through the college's Career Training Institute (CTI). These programs are noncredit; however, successful graduates are placed in entry level jobs and are given some credit-by-examination for their coursework. Sixty percent of the CTI graduates enter credit programs as part-time students within their first year of employment.

Federal, state, and local welfare regulations actually restrict access to higher education for clients because a welfare recipient who enters college with a financial aid award loses certain welfare services automatically. Although the college has been able to provide some of these students with additional stipends through the Educational Opportunity Fund program and foundation scholarships, MCCC has not been able to lower this access barrier for most students.

Sociocultural Barriers

Family pressures as an access barrier cover a wide range of situations and life/familial stages. Familial obligations bar many women from college opportunities. Ethnic traditions sometimes run counter to access. Single-parenting has been shown time and again as an access

barrier. Family disorganization is a very strong access barrier. MCCC's policy has been to address these pressures on potential students through personal counseling, referral to appropriate agencies, and making small-group counseling available to potential students. The plan has been to help potential students resolve or control family pressures as part of the access process.

Potential students for whom English is not a first language have a special access barrier -- a language barrier. As most of the Non-English speaking members of the Mercer County community are Hispanic and Haitian, the college employs admissions counselors who are fluent in Spanish and French. The college has, also, a large group of potential students who are foreign nationals. For these students, the college offers a two-stage access process. Foreign nationals and Haitian students are placed in one of the MCCC's English as a Second Language programs where their competency in English is raised to the appropriate level. There is one credit program and two non-credit programs. Successful graduates of these programs have an open access to the other credit and non-credit programs offered through the college. Hispanic students who are interested in earning a degree are placed directly into a special, bilingual access program which is designed to increase their

competency in English and to introduce them to various career options through a selection of general education courses.

The culture of poverty which engulfs most of the inner-city residents served by the college is a formidable access barrier. Potential students within this culture not only suffer many of the personal access barriers described above, but also suffer a debilitating cycle of personal failures, a sense of hopelessness, and a dysfunctional or disorganized lifestyle. To meet these access challenges, MCCC has developed non-credit programs for disadvantaged children and young adults. These programs bring academic, civic-minded, and cultural richness into the lives of these young people.

Although prejudice and discrimination are always paired together in discussions on access, prejudice is much more of an access barrier because it affects the thinking of the potential minority student. Too often, racial minority persons actually believe that college is a "white persons' place." Too often, women report that they perceive college to be "the exclusive domain of males." These feelings are strong access barriers that must be challenged. MCCC has approached these barriers with campus and community-site career fairs and special, small-group counseling sessions.

As our society moves further into the new electronic age, knowledge of how to use new communication and information retrieval devices will become necessary for all citizens. Technological competencies are becoming an access barrier because MCCC and other colleges have integrated the new technologies into their operations faster than the general public has become accommodated to them. As a result, automated telephone systems and computerized forms and output are very confusing to potential students. Although MCCC does try to provide human contact for all potential students who may need to interact with a live person, it is impossible at this point to know how many potential students are lost because they cannot cope with the automated telephone system and cannot understand the computerized form letters which are mailed to them.

Socioeducational Barriers

Many potential students do not have the academic skills necessary to succeed in credit coursework. This is such a pervasive access problem that the State of New Jersey has taken a leadership role with the colleges in developing a placement test and guidelines for such students. In a nutshell, every potential student must complete a New Jersey College Basic Skill Placement Test (NJCBSPT) whose results prescribe whether the student needs remediation or not.

Interestingly, the NJCBSPT has become part of a solution to one access barrier and an new access barrier in itself for some populations of potential students who are frightened of tests, especially a four-hour test.

MCCC has taken the approach that potential students who have inadequate academic skills need a two-step access process. First, these students are provisionally placed in degree programs of their choice while being given a schedule of developmental courses for which the college gives institutional credit (but not transfer or program credit). Once students have successfully completed their remedial coursework, MCCC provides a special admissions counseling program through which they are provided access (full acceptance) into degree programs of their choice.

As in most parts of the United States, illiteracy is a growing problem in New Jersey and Mercer County. Never having learned to read is probably the worst access barrier to higher education. The sufferer can only receive information orally and in very basic vocabulary. Further, personal embarrassment blocks any remediation of the situation.

To combat illiteracy, MCCC has established a three-pronged program. For adults who need group support, the college operates a day and evening Adult Basic Education

program. Also, there is an individual tutoring program for adults who feel more comfortable in a one-on-one situation. At the James Kerney Campus, three youth programs -- Upward Bound, Talent Search, and SMILE -- address the problem of youthful illiteracy. Although the road from illiteracy to college-level literacy is very long, each year the college provides access to degree programs for a handful of potential students who have made their way up that road.

The image of the open-door community college has been an access barrier itself. Because of the democratic approach to admitting students, community colleges, including MCCC, have been viewed as "dumping grounds" and not "real colleges." As a result, many potential students shy away from enrolling at a community college. MCCC has challenged this barrier through the publication of personal testimonials from successful graduates and current students. Hard-won articulation agreements with well-known, four-year colleges and universities are used, also, in marketing materials and at career days to recognize MCCC's excellence as a college which gives everyone the opportunity to succeed in higher education.

High school experiences have soured some potential students toward education in general and their intellectual abilities in particular. These potential students either

believe that they are not college material, as they were often told by their teachers, or believe that academic pursuits are not their forte. MCCC has found success in breaking this access barrier by inviting such potential students to open-house events where they can be introduced to the hands-on career programs available through the college and to talk with faculty members.

In our society, the minimum requirement for decent employment and higher education is the high school diploma or its substitute, the GED Certificate. Without one of these, potential students have been denied access to higher education. MCCC has torn down this access barrier. During its first 20-years of operation, MCCC offered high school dropouts the opportunity to take 12 credits of college coursework as non-matriculated students. After successfully completing 12 credits, these students were matriculated into degree programs and granted a GED certificate by the State of New Jersey.

When the State of New Jersey made its GED policy more stringent, MCCC established a GED training program which it offers free to any resident of the county. Further, the college changed its admission policy in 1985 to make age the only general requirement for admission to the college and acceptance into degree programs. To seek acceptance into a

degree program, a potential student needs only to be 18 years of age or older and to fulfill the specific requirements of said program.

Institutional Organization and Culture Barriers

Lack of precedent, personalized/tailored counseling, role models, and sensitivity among staff and faculty are access barriers which tend to be interrelated. The scenario is substantially the same. Each time a new subpopulation of potential students is identified, the college must address the particularistic characteristics of that subpopulation. Usually, most colleges address these students' needs after sufficient numbers have already entered and experienced a revolving door. Sometimes, the revolving door is right at the point of access.

Traditionally, MCCC has addressed these interrelated barriers by developing and implementing special credit and non-credit programs which act in semi-independent fashion by recruiting, registering, instructing, and serving their students as a group outside the college mainstream. This cushioning approach requires additional funding and cannot be sufficiently implemented in a time of tight budgets and restricted hiring. Currently, the college is moving to a strategic planning process and operations model which should address the access barriers mentioned above.

One of the biggest access barriers is cost. Potential students either cannot get financial aid or just cannot garner enough capital to pay for tuition, fees, books and supplies. These cost barriers are continuing to rise not only with inflation and the change to a service economy, but also with the withdrawal of educational fringe benefits in both the private and public sectors. There is not really much the college can do with this growing access barrier. MCCC has moved to a lean budget and is working with the foundations which it has established to (a) create part-time scholarships for students, (b) provide funding for special operations, and (c) ensure adequate maintenance of high-technology equipment. As a result, MCCC offers one of the lowest tuition rates in the New Jersey community college sector.

Admissions requirements and restrictive policies are institutional access barriers that need to be watched and countered when necessary. Although MCCC has eliminated access barriers with respect to its general admissions policy, there are some degree and certificate programs which require completion of specific, high school level courses as prerequisites, e.g., chemistry, physics, and mathematics. For potential students who have not completed such requirements successfully in high school, MCCC offers

lower-level courses to fulfill program prerequisites.

As an institution of higher learning, MCCC has a number of academic policies which are restrictive in nature. These include policies on academic standing, academic progress, general education requirements, general and specific program graduation requirements, academic integrity, and student deportment (student discipline). While these policies do not restrict initial access to the college, they do dramatically affect re-access. There is a growing population of dropout students who attended MCCC and left with poor academic records. More mature and older, these students are trying to return to the college (seeking re-access) only to find that their prior records are affecting their re-entry negatively. MCCC is currently reviewing alternative bridges over this access barrier.

In comprehensive community colleges, disjointed operations are a real access barrier. The array of non-credit and credit operations within a college can tend to become mutually exclusive. When this happens, potential credit students who are currently non-credit students can be lost. Two examples should suffice:

1. MCCC has non-credit youth programs which can assist underprivileged youth to develop the motivation and tools for taking advantage of higher education. These programs serve junior school and high school students who should have direct and open access into degree and certificate programs.

2. Graduates of the non-credit Career Training Institute of MCCC should have open access into degree and certificate programs, as should graduates from the college's High School Equivalency (GED) Program, also.

In order to coordinate credit and non-credit programs to provide free access tracks for potential students, MCCC operates a special, internal recruitment program which involves career days, focused small-group sessions conducted by counselors, and coordination meetings among credit and non-credit program personnel.

If all the other access barriers were to be eliminated, limited program offerings and an inappropriate master class schedule would still severely limit access. At MCCC, offering programs of interest to potential students has been either a guessing game or a "push-pull" struggle between liberal arts and vocational education proponents in the college. Also, if potential students cannot get the courses they want in a time period which they can attend, admission to the college has no worth. Further, in colleges which have collective bargaining agreements like MCCC, there appears to be a neverending battle over faculty preferences for courses and time slots and serving the needs of potential students. MCCC is embarking on a strategic planning model which will, hopefully, solve its historical "hit-or-miss" approach to developing new programs. As for

the master class schedule problem, no real solution has been developed other than diligent oversight by academic administrators.

Federal and State Regulations

In the 1990's, the federal and state governments have looked toward colleges as centers for the implementation of social programs and/or the control of social problems. Two examples of this trend are the new legislation which has been passed on student health insurance and student immunization records. According to these new regulations, potential students are to prove that they are insured and to provide proof of immunization to a list of specific diseases before they can complete their registration. Uninsured students must purchase insurance, and students who have not been immunized must do so and provide proof. At the present time, most colleges like MCCC are simply implementing these requirements as slowly as possible.

Reduction in federal and state funding support is an indirect, but formidable, access barrier for potential students. As a result of the significant budget cuts in the State of New Jersey, MCCC and its sister schools have all had to increase tuition and fees. Also, the reduction of grant programs and the addition of entitlement guidelines to surviving grant programs have led to significant losses in

funding to schools like MCCC which have been very successful in winning many and large grant awards.

Further, the federal and state governments are artificially suppressing financial aid to potential students by keeping eligibility requirements out of phase with current economic pressures and salary levels. Potential students who do not qualify for financial aid and do not have sufficient personal funds to meet high educational costs are, in a real sense, denied access to higher education. As a result, the part-time student population is rising dramatically at MCCC as is the phenomenon of "stopping out."

There is, in addition, a growing incidence of potential students going through the admissions and registration process only to drop out at the last step because they cannot pay their bills. At present, MCCC permits some potential students to make partial payments on an individual request basis. In the future, MCCC may move to an installment payment plan for all students who can demonstrate need.

New state and federal disclosure regulations which require colleges to inform potential students of program graduation statistics and campus crime statistics are evolving into new access barriers. Disclosure documents, as

required by law, do not address the complex picture of real life. Graduation statistics must be viewed in light of current transfer trends and the "stopout" phenomenon. Campus crime statistics need to be compared with those of other colleges and with crime rates within the general community from which students come. Most prospective students are not sophisticated enough to understand the information which is presented to them. In many cases, they suffer an information overload which reduces their desire to continue through the admissions process. Many colleges, including MCCC, are trying to come to grips with this problem.

Finally, state and federal government demands in the area of affirmative action are becoming an access barrier and creating a double-edged problem, a no-win situation. These demands are "out of sync" with the growing problem of limited revenue and tight budgets which is now plaguing MCCC and other colleges. More role models are needed to increase minority student retention. In this respect, affirmative action demands are legitimate and must be met. Still, if additional money and effort are directed toward meeting affirmative action needs, access and support programs must be cut.

EVOLVING ACCESS BARRIERS

For open access institutions such as MCCC, the future is brightened by the number of partnership programs being implemented with high schools, other colleges, businesses, and industries. These programs are excellent barrier breachers.

However, there is a problem with respect to funding partnership and other barrier-bridging services and programs. These services and programs rely on tuition surpluses and government funding, both of which are in decline. Further, we have entered a social period in America where citizens are challenging further educational costs and the taxation to support new services and programs.

Insufficient funding is becoming a very powerful access barrier which may force open access institutions to make one of three, difficult and nonproductive choices. These choices are as follows: (a) to reduce or eliminate special programs which address and bridge certain access barriers, mostly in the categories of personal barriers and sociocultural barriers; (b) to continue its current programs and services and to limit the number of potential, nontraditional students sought and processed; and/or (c) to eliminate open access altogether. After more than two

hundred years of growth and service, American higher education may be entering a period of constriction at a most critical time -- when it is most needed. Regretfully, many community colleges in various states are selecting one of these three choices.

There are indications that affirmative action and diversity programs are actually causing a new polarization among community groups. Racism between minority groups is emerging, e.g., Hispanics against African Americans. Asian immigrants are choosing not to attend college programs at MCCC and other community colleges in which the major student population is African American. And, "white-black" pressures are building within the community. This growing group identification, self-discrimination, and prejudice may heighten traditional access barriers and generate new ones in the future. These newly evolving barriers are (a) the identification of inner-city college campuses as "black campuses," (b) labeling of certain programs as belonging to certain groups, and (c) a militant disinterest in the college as an avenue of upward mobility.

The economic situation in New Jersey and other states which have lost their traditional industrial base has the potential for creating additional access barriers. The change from a production-based economy to a service-based

economy has had some significant drawbacks for workers. Part-time jobs are replacing full-time jobs. Most service jobs pay lower wages than the production jobs which they have replaced. If a college graduate does not land a job which pays substantially more than the job obtained by a non-college graduate, why go to college? If a non-college graduate can get the same job a college graduate can get, why go to college?

These situations are real and are multiplying for associate degree graduates. In the future, an unresponsive economy can become a powerful access barrier. A potential student who sees no difference in the economic success of college graduates and non-graduates is not going to be interested in attending college.

Lastly, there is a newly evolving access barrier for MCCC as well as for other community colleges. This barrier is the growing number of dropouts. While dropouts leave the college, they do not leave the community. They are a constant reminder of failure to potential students. They tend, also, to provide potential students with negative counseling. The so-called "cooling out" function of the community college is about to become its "number one," self-established access barrier.

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